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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 11730

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TAGS: PFOR, PINT, UR, US

SUBJ: TRAVEL CONTROLS IN THE UKRAINE: VILLAGE VISITS

1. SUMMARY: CURRENT INDICATIONS POINT TO A LIMITED, THOUGH POSSIBLY SIGNIFICANT LOOSENING OF SOVIET TRAVEL CONTROLS OVER AMERICAN-UKRAINIAN TOURISTS WISHING TO VISIT RELATIVES IN THE WESTERN UKRAINE. WHILE THE MORE PERMISSIVE POLICY MAY NOT APPLY GENERALLY THROUGHOUT THE UKRAINE, IT MAY REPRESENT A SOVIET INITIATIVE IN THAT DIRECTION. END SUMMARY.

2. IN CONVERSATIONS IN KIEV JULY 19 WITH 3 UKRAINIAN-AMERICAN TOURISTS, MEMBERS OF A TOUR GROUP SPONSORED BY THE SCOP TRAVEL AGENCY OF FLUSHING, L.I., KIEV ADVANCE PARTY LEARNED THAT SEVERAL OF THE SCOP GROUP HAD TRAVELED FROM TERNOPOL TO VISIT CLOSE RELEATIVES IN THEIR HOME VILLAGES FOR UP TO THREE DAYS AND NIGHTS AS FAR AS 90 KM FROM TERNOPOL. EVIDENTLY ALL THE AMRICANS WERE RETURNING TO THE UKRAINE FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE WAR. ONE NEW JERSEY WOMAN HAD WAITED YEARS FOR AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEE HER INVALID MOTHER. HER DAUGHTER CONFIDED THAT THOUGH THEIR ITINERARY INDICATED NOTHING ABOUT THE VILLAGE STAY, THEY HAD BEEN DISCRETELY ASSURED AT THE TRAVEL AGENCY IT COULD BE DONE.

3. TRAVEL TO THE VILLAGES TOOK PLACE BY TAXI OR BY PRIVATE CARS OF RELATIVES. THE NJ WOMAN'S BROTHER, A

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VATE CARS OF RELATIVES. THE NJ WOMAN'S BROTHER, A

COMMUNIST PARTY MEMBER, PICKED HER UP AT THE HOTEL IN TERNOPOL. HER DAUGHTER SAID THE TRIP TO THE VILLAGE WAS NERVE-WRACKING BECAUSE OF FREQUENT PASSAGE THROUGH OBVIOUS MILITARY AREAS. THEY WERE NEVER STOPPED, HOWEVER. ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE GROUP TRAVELED TO HIS VILLAGE NEAR THE POLISH BORDER. HE FOUND THE AREA SO THICK WITH MILITARY HE RETURNED TO TERNOPOL OUT OF ANXIETY AFTER TWO DAYS. THE SCOP GROUP STAYED IN DOUBLE ROOMS IN THEIR HOTEL AND MADE SURE AT LEAST ONE PERSON SLEPT IN EACH ROOM EACH NIGHT, THEREBY, THEY THEORIZED, COVERING THE OTHERS' ABSENCE IN THE VILLAGES. THE TRAVEL AGENCY HAD SUGGESTED THAT IF THE TOURISTS WERE STOPPED EN ROUTE, THEY OFFER THE AUTHORITIES 25-30 RUBLES AND CONTINUE THEIR TRIP.

4. THE GROUP'S INTOURIST GUIDE, ASKED ABOUT THE VILLAGE VISITS, WAS UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO COMMENT. ACCORDING TO THE AMERICANS, SHE WAS ENCOURAGING THEM TO BELIEVE THE VILLAGE VISITS WERE THE RESULT OF HER PERSONAL GOOD WILL. AS A RESULT, THE GROUP TREATED HER WITH UNIFORM RESPECT AND AFFECTION AND PRAISED HER AND INTOURIST FOR THEIR "UNDERSTANDING." THE YOUNG AND ATTRACTIVE GUIDE TOLD THE AMERICANS THIS WAS HER FIRST EXTENDED TRAVEL (TWO WEEKS) WITH AN AMERICAN GROUP AND SOME, BELIEVING HER, WONDERED IF SHE HAD NOT BEEN NAIVELY PERMISSIVE.

5. THE AMERICANS WERE EXTREMELY PLEASED WITH THEIR VILLAGE VISITS AND REPORTED FRIENDLY RECEPTIONS. ONE MAN SAID THAT EVERYONE IN HIS VILLAGE OF 1,000 PERSONS KNEW HE WAS THERE; HE EVEN HAD A DRINK WITH THE LOCAL MAYOR. HE HAD VISITED HIS BROTHER, AN INVALIDED WAR VETERAN. THE LOCAL RELATIVES WERE FAIRLY RELAXED IN RECEIVING THE AMERICANS BUT POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS WERE GENERALLY AVOIDED. AMERICANS OBSERVED WITH SATISFACTION THAT EDUCATIONAL LEVELS HAD RISEN CONSIDERABLY, AND THAT ONLY THE UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE WAS SPOKEN. THEY NOTED THAT KOLKHOZ WORKING CONDITIONS WERE TERRIBLE: 12-14 HOURS PER DAY AND AT 90 R PER MONTH.

6. THE AMERICAN TOURISTS SAID THEY PLANNED TO SPREAD
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THE WORD AT HOME QUIETLY OF THEIR SUCCESSFUL VISITS. THEY EXPECT MORE UKRAINIAN-AMERICANS WILL RETURN TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT RELATIVES IN THEIR HOME VILLAGES.

7. COMMENT. SO FAR AS THE ADVANCE PARTY AND THE EMBASSY ARE AWARE, IN THE PAST, UKRAINIAN-AMERICANS HAVE SELDOM BEEN ALLOWED TO MAKE EVEN DAY TRIPS TO HOME

VILLAGES, MUCH LESS STAYS OF THREE DAYS. THE PRESENT INDICATIONS OF A CHANGE IN SOVIET TRAVEL CONTROL POLICY IS OF COURSE BASED ON THE EXPERIENCE OF A SMALL GROUP OF TOURISTS (12), BUT THE AREA OUTSIDE TERNOPOL IS OFFICIALLY CLOSED AND THE TRAVEL SEEMS TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE THERE DESPITE THE VISIBLE SOVIET MILITARY PRESENCE. THE REPORTED LOOSENING OF CONTROLS MAY REFLECT A GROWING CONFIDENCE OF THE AUTHORITIES IN THE PREVIOUSLY TROUBLE-SOME WESTERN UKRAINE, AND PERHAPS ALSO A TEST DEMONSTRATION OF GOOD WILL TOWARDS UKRAINIAN-AMERICANS, A GROUP HOSTILE OR AT LEAST COOL TO THE SOVIETS TO DATE.

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